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Corps of Engineers to Host Public Meetings for Draft Environmental Assessment of the Revised Shoreline Management Plan for Walter F. George Lake (Lake Eufaula)

Mobile, Ala. – The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Mobile District will hold two open-house style meetings to collect public comments on the Draft Environmental Assessment (EA) for the revised Shoreline Management Plan (SMP) for Walter F. George Lake (also called Lake Eufaula) in Georgia and Alabama.

The meetings will be held on Tuesday, May 10.

- The first meeting will be held from 3:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m. (EDT) at George T. Bagby State Park Lodge (Room: Queen City Hall), 330 Bagby Parkway, Fort Gaines, GA.
- The second meeting will be held from 6:00 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. (CDT) at the James S. Clark Center (home of the Eufaula/Barbour County Chamber of Commerce), 333 E. Broad Street, Eufaula, AL.

Both meetings will be identical in format. The meetings will be informal, with several subject matter displays showing information related to the EA and SMP. The meetings will allow time for participants to review the Draft EA and SMP and to provide comments to the resource staff attending the meeting. There will also be an opportunity to sign up for the project mailing list (email preferred) to receive updates on the EA and SMP process.

The Corps is soliciting comments from the general public, federal, state and local agencies and officials, Indian tribes, and other interested parties on the Draft EA for the revisions to the existing SMP. The Corps will consider any relevant comments received in finalizing the EA and SMP. The Draft EA is currently available for public review during a 45-day review period on the project website at www.WalterFGeorgeEA-SMP.net. **Comments can be submitted online through the website or they can be submitted at the public meeting.** If you prefer to mail in your comments, they can be mailed to: Melissa DeSantis, Tetra Tech, Inc. (Corps Contractor), 10306 Eaton Place, Suite 340, Fairfax, VA 22030. **All comments must be received (or postmarked) by May 28, 2011.**

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“The Corps received over 1,700 comments during the Scoping Phase,” said E. Patrick Robbins, Chief, Public Affairs, Mobile District. “We looked at all those comments very carefully and have attempted to achieve a balance between serving present needs around the lake and preserving and protecting the resources at Walter F. George for future generations.”

“We are now looking to the public to provide additional comments and suggestions as we move forward in this process,” said Robbins.

The Corps manages the water and land areas at Walter F. George Lake to ensure compliance with specific Congressional authorized project purposes including hydroelectric power generation, navigation, recreation, water quality, and fish and wildlife conservation. Regulatory requirements established by the Chief of Engineers (Engineer Regulation 1130-2-406) require that a SMP be prepared for each Corps water resource development project where private shoreline use is allowed. Each SMP is required to be reviewed periodically and revised as necessary. The original SMP for the lake was prepared in 1979 and the last revision was completed in 2001. It has been determined that the existing plan for the lake must be revised at this time in light of increased demand on Corps resources at Walter F. George Lake, as well as increased growth and development around the lake.

The Corps has prepared this Draft EA to determine if there will be any significant impacts to the environment as a result of the revisions to the SMP and to evaluate alternative means to achieve the Corps' objectives. The study area consists of the shoreline and adjacent public lands and waters of Walter F. George Lake in Alabama and Georgia. There are currently 275-miles of project shoreline divided into limited development areas, public recreation areas, protected shoreline areas, and prohibited areas.

Upon completion of the 45-day public comment period, the EA will be finalized and the EA process will conclude with either a Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) or a determination to proceed with the preparation of an Environmental Impact Statement.

For more information, visit www.WalterFGeorgeEA-SMP.net or contact Sara Jernigan at 229-768-2516.